



REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

During the conference, there was time dedicated for *regional breakout* discussion sessions where people from the same geographic regions of the country could meet and explore issues and concerns relevant to volunteer programs in that part of the country. The goal of these facilitated discussions was to identify concrete steps that volunteer groups in each region could take to move volunteer monitoring into the mainstream. Breakouts were organized according to EPA's 10 geographic regions. Participants were asked to address the following three questions.

1. What progress has been made in the past few years in increasing the role of volunteer monitors in water quality decision making in your region?
2. What obstacles/needs are preventing volunteer monitoring from playing a bigger role?
3. What are some concrete steps we can take to move volunteer monitoring (more) into the mainstream?

Several of the regional breakout sessions provided a discussion summary for inclusion in these proceedings. The notes from those regions are included here.

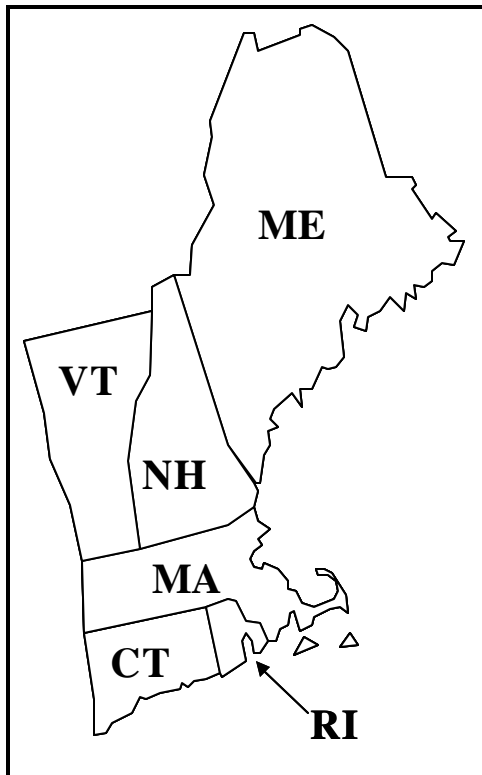
Which EPA Region are you in?

Region 1:	CT, MA, ME, VT, NH, RI
Region 2:	NY, NJ, VI, PR
Region 3:	DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV
Region 4:	AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN
Region 5:	IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI
Region 6:	AR, LA, NM, OK, TX
Region 7:	IA, KS, MO, NE
Region 8:	CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY
Region 9:	AZ, CA, NV, GU, HI, AS
Region 10:	AK, ID, OR, WA



REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

notes from Region 1



DISCUSSION LEADERS

Diane Switzer, Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator
EPA New England
60 West View Street, Lexington, MA 02421
phone: 781/860-4377, fax: 781/860-4397
email: switzer.diane@epa.gov

Matthew Lyman
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106-5127
phone: 860/424-3158, fax: 860/424-4055
email: matthew.lyman@po.state.ct.us

Types of volunteer monitoring groups:

Large organizations and small groups represented. Wide spectrum of water bodies and parameters studied. Long-term programs and new efforts; earliest dates from 1967 (Maine estuaries). State and university associated programs, federal programs, and groups working independently of large institutions.

Concerns:

How do we meet the demand for training in different areas of New England, and for different monitoring skills.

There are individuals and small groups that are not reached by national and regional meetings. We need to try to help them get started, and to become familiar with other people and groups that share their interests, or can help.

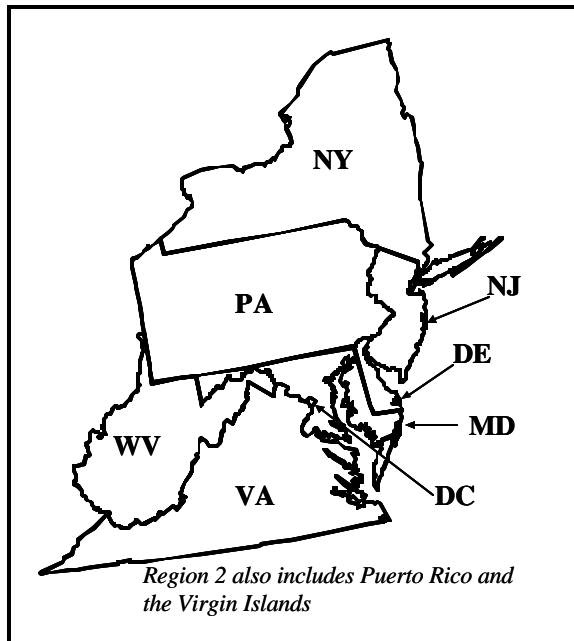
Needs and recommendations:

- Consistent funding
- Regional New England wide meeting in 2001
- Workshops on specific topics held for smaller geographic areas, and /or to address a specific part of monitoring
- Would like to have a peer review of volunteer monitoring programs
- Creation of self-evaluation tools
- Need to help groups in capacity building to develop healthy organization, outreach, and sustainable funding. Tools are under development in this area.
- Would be helpful to have resources to bring in professional experts to meet with groups, and to advise on review and assessment of monitoring data.
- Would like state-wide meetings of program managers so they can learn about additional monitoring techniques and develop skills that help them in working with other groups.
- Participation with schools is an important undertaking. Teachers should be encouraged to share their experiences and promote student involvement.



REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

notes from Regions 2 and 3



Discussion leaders:

Rita Bruckler, Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator
MD Department of Natural Resources
580 Taylor Avenue, C-2, Annapolis, MD 21401
phone: 410/260-8696, fax: 410/260-8620
email: Rbruckler@dnr.state.md.us

Diane Wilson, Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator
PA Department of Environmental Protection
PO Box 8555, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8555
phone: 717/787-3730, fax: 717/787-9549
email: wilson.diane@dep.state.pa.us

The conference attendees from Region 2 (NJ, NY, PR, VI) and Region 3 (DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV) decided to combine forces and meet together during the regional breakout session.

The discussion session was productive and informative. We discussed the progress made in citizen water monitoring throughout both regions, and came up with a number of points.

There has been a substantial increase in the following areas:

- Citizen involvement
- Credibility and data use by state and local governments
- Number of statewide coordinators
- Technical skills and training opportunities for citizens
- Watershed management plans
- Impact of volunteer monitoring on decision making

Of course, there is still much work to do. Some of the obstacles that we identified are:

- Funding (volunteer monitoring is cost effective but not free)
- Need for easier access to technical support
- Need to coordinate early with data users
- Greater recognition of the value of volunteer-collected data
- Need for more networking opportunities
- Some felt that the TMDL process is diverting resources away from other protection strategies

A number of steps were identified that should help move citizen monitoring into the mainstream:

- More innovative environmental education for all constituents (not just students)
- Greater effort to inform the public about the successes of citizen monitoring
- Greater involvement of volunteer monitors in local decision making
- More guidance from coordinators to local groups



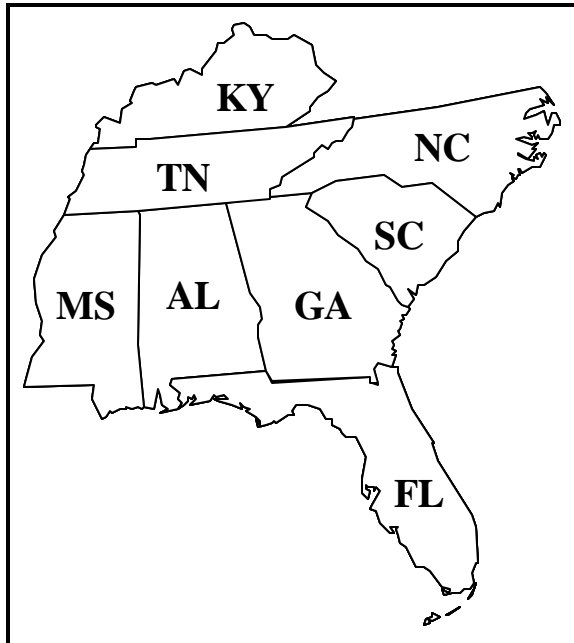
- More partnerships
- More SOPs and QAPPs
- Better communication of results to the community and elected officials
- EPA should designate full-time volunteer monitoring coordinators in each region
- Regional gatherings of volunteer monitors and coordinators in years between national conferences

If we address these needs and obstacles, then citizen monitoring will become a greater part of community life and the decision making process.



REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

notes from Region 4



Discussion leader:

Patti Hurley
Alabama Dept. of Environmental Management
PO Box 301463, Montgomery, AL 36130-1463
phone: 334/394-4350, fax: 334/394-4383
email: pah@adem.state.al.us

Top Needs and Requests from Region 4

- Regional meetings and training.
- Data management/STORET training in Atlanta:
 - Should include mandate of working with volunteer groups
 - Should be held in various areas (if possible)
 - Should address locational data management across state lines
- Coordination within EPA and among public agencies on funding of volunteer projects in states.
- Technology Transfer Recommendations:
 - Shared info on what people are doing and how they are managing their programs
 - Info sharing through an electronic newsletter and/or "list serve"
 - Volunteer monitoring web site for Region 4
 - More active role in support of volunteer monitoring by EPA Regional Volunteer Coordinator
- TMDL assistance
- Marketing of volunteer programs by EPA to the state agencies and EPA regions and in a variety of public venues, stressing how well volunteers can truly help in all the processes and getting across the idea that getting more information into a decision can make better final (or interim) decision.
- TMDL assistance for volunteer groups. Volunteers and agencies alike need to know the role, and limits of the role, of volunteer programs in the TMDL process. Examples of how we can really help would be useful. Writing up a model program (like Santa Cruz) to demonstrate successful partnerships with volunteers would be valuable.
- EPA should coordinate and help with funding/equipment to assist volunteer groups in the identification of water quality or other parameters as part of the TMDL process.

Region 4 Discussion at the National Volunteer Conference in Austin, Texas, April 26-30th, 2000:

I. List of a Combination of Challenges, Problems and Needs

- Data management/database compatibility
- Programs fit funding criteria but don't get funded (CWAP doesn't have a place for volunteers to request).
 - 319 is political disbursement of funding
 - Retention of volunteers: need for recognition and celebrations (possible regionally) and awards at the local level (state); state awards would keep volunteers up to date on current issues and progress made by the states.
 - Lack of Regional conferences
 - Open up technical training facilities, i.e., in Atlanta at EPA headquarters (need to brainstorm this one)
 - STORET training
 - Link up information across state lines and facilitate a grass roots approach that solicits participation from stakeholders throughout the process
 - Be involved in the SE Water Pollution Biologist's Association conferences with examples of what we have really done.
 - Mapping: for geographical data base– by basin or watershed instead of political boundaries. Do we have good site identification and mapping for GIS in the future?
 - Means for regular communications (Regional): list server, newsletter, web site (need volunteer state to host this for us)



- Mandate a STORET coordinator in each state for volunteer programs working with volunteer groups (state coordinator or program person to be paid for by the 319 program).
- How to get data into the right hands, the decision makers

II. Actual Region SUCCESSES:

- Memorandum of Agreements between Georgia and Alabama for citizens groups.
- Volunteer representative on boards and citizen councils to the state and local agencies (KY and AL)
- Agencies working together with water management district/counties (St. John, FL)
- Storm water management group (AL) working with permit program.
- State groups that write grants together so they do not compete (KY).
- Establishment of a website in Hillsborough County, Florida with 40,000 hits monthly (www.lakesaltas.usf.edu)
- Historical information verified by the volunteers in order to help in the restoration process and in many other programs including TMDLs.
- Long term volunteers in program and yet they only measure WQ near shore programs (FL Keys). They see need to protect waters they care about.
 - Water quality sampling added to the coral reef degradation sites (FL and we all volunteered to help them!)
 - Cities and counties have started or picked up on volunteer monitoring programs as help in the storm water monitoring program as well as the water wars process (Atlanta).
 - Biologists have realized the value of having more data.

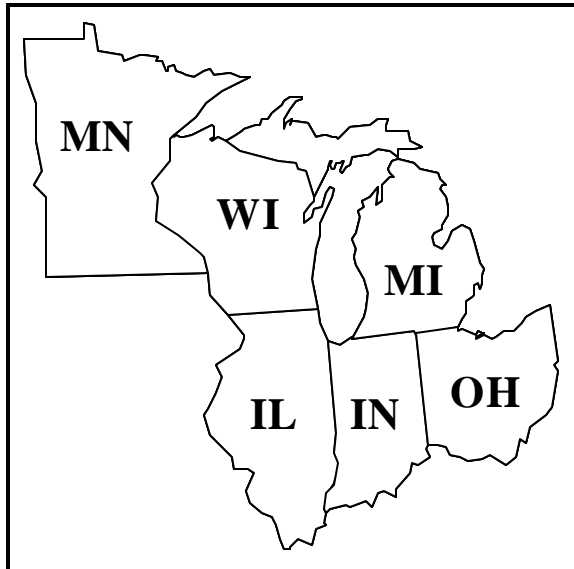
III. Funding Possibilities

- Get cities and water districts to recognize and partner (GA and others)
- More TMDL EPA money for volunteer groups to closely monitor best management practices, over the long term
- Coordination and collaboration among agencies on the importance of volunteers.
- Show the key needs of all states that would assist in collaboration and funding for
 - Database and data management and sharing
 - Sample analysis with state approval
 - Regional conference to support these needs
 - Develop some collaboration models for state agencies to work together
 - Presentations at other national and regional conferences (volunteers groups need to develop a message and be ready to offer to go and make critical funding statements!



REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

notes from Region 5



Discussion leaders:

Gary Kohlhepp
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 30273, Lansing, MI 48820
phone: 517/335-1289, fax: 517/373-9958
email: kohlhepg@state.mi.us

Sarah Lehmann
USEPA Region 5
77 West Jackson Blvd. (WT-15J)
Chicago, IL 60604
phone: 312/353-4328, fax: 312/886-0168
email: Lehmann.Sarah@epa.gov

Action Items/Recommendations

- Increase regional coordination/communication
 - Hold volunteer monitoring conferences and workshops in the region (EPA lead with coordination committee. Joan Martin and Dana Curtis volunteered to sit on a committee)
 - Set up a list server to improve communication across the region (Illinois Ecowatch)
 - Provide access to available information/materials that would assist volunteer groups
- Support and encourage volunteer monitoring
 - Document how volunteer monitoring has benefited government and other decision-makers
 - Share success stories via various means (workshops, newsletters, websites, etc.)
- Outline the objectives (data needs) at multiple scales (e.g., federal - CWA, state, local)
 - Identify QA needed to meet objectives (EPA lead with workgroup support?) (Discussed at the November EPA/State volunteer meeting as well)
 - Coordinate with groups at larger geographic scales to identify needs (e.g., coordinate with Gulf of Mexico program to determine how mid-western volunteer monitoring can assist) (EPA provide leadership role)
- Identify funding and other resource opportunities (share this information with others)

Discussion

- Follow-up to 1996 National Volunteer Monitoring Meeting
 - Regional groups are looking for U.S. EPA, Region 5 to take a more hands on approach to supporting volunteer monitoring in the region. Mechanisms to improve coordination and communication are needed beyond national meetings.

Coordination/Communication

This is one of the essential needs identified. In particular, the participants stressed the need to improve and maintain channels for communicating about volunteer monitoring. Possible ways to achieve this include:

- Hold workshops
- Sponsor a list server
- Identify how volunteer data has been used by agencies/groups, etc.
- Coordinate with wider groups/geographic scales
- Act and speak collectively in identifying needs and dealing with agencies.

Quality Assurance/Quality Control Issues

- Federal, state, and local agency receptiveness to the data and information provided by volunteers is also a big issue.
- Regulatory and non-regulatory objectives (purposes) need to be identified, and the necessary QA described for meeting those objectives.



- EPA can assist by playing a stronger leadership role in emphasizing the value of VM data, and encouraging each state to maintain a volunteer monitoring coordinator.

Training

- Several volunteers expressed interest in getting training in study design and statistical analysis. Consensus on the specific level of training required was not reached.

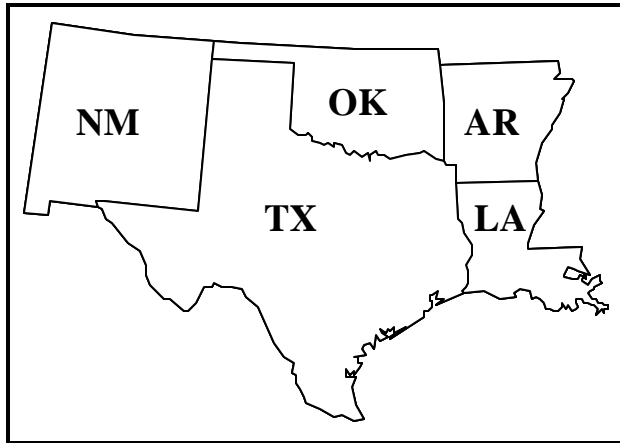
Funding

- Increased resources are necessary to continue operating volunteer organizations.



REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

notes from Region 6



Discussion leaders:

Mike Bira, EPA Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue 6WQ-EW
Dallas, TX 75202-2733
phone: 214/665-6668, fax: 214/665-6689
email: bira.mike@epa.gov

Eric Mendelman, Texas Watch
ELA 369, SWTSU, 601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666
phone: 512/245-1409, fax: 512/245-2035
email: em20@swt.edu

USEPA Regional Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator
Mike Bira opened the session and introduced Eric Mendelman, Program Coordinator, Southwest Texas State University's Texas Watch as the session moderator.

Participants were primarily from Texas, with a few from Oklahoma and Louisiana. Eric opened the discussion by posing the question, "What is the appropriate balance of resources between investing in quality assurance guidance and support, and providing opportunities for involvement for the greatest distribution of monitoring groups?"

The group began by discussing the expectations monitors have for the use of their data, with the focus being what alternatives are available for volunteer data to be considered by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission in their stream designations, including the 305b report and the 303d list. The two proposals were: (1) devote considerable resources to a few monitoring locations (25 sites per year) to ensure the highest level of quality assurance defined by the TNRCC, under the Texas Watch QAPP, for generating data to be entered into the state's database, and (2) taking advantage of the Texas Clean Rivers Act public input process to submit data, not as having been pre-approved by the TNRCC, but as part of the mandated requirement that the TNRCC consider data from all sources in its site assessment and designation determinations.

Staff from TNRCC commented that to focus resources on QC would necessarily limit the geographical distribution of sites. Some commented that a minimum amount of QC guidance is essential, and that it is helpful for the TNRCC to identify locations and indicators it would like to receive from volunteers, to help guide program study design. Others suggested that to concentrate exclusively on quality assurance is to exclude a great percentage of the state's monitors, which does not seem appropriate for a statewide volunteer monitoring organization.

Another TNRCC staff member commented that the agency is being called to task for failing to emphasize the public input process, and that Texas Watch could serve this purpose by disseminating information to the public about how to participate in this process.

It was noted by a volunteer monitoring group coordinator that information concerning costs and benefits, in dollars and cents, would help strengthen involvement in his area (Houston). He also asked about the "black hole" of data being submitted with no response coming back to the monitors. Eric reminded the group of the Texas Watch data viewer as an avenue for monitors to view their data on the Web. Another program coordinator commented that to continue to serve a large distribution of monitors, the monitors needed to assume responsibility for accessing the data via this resource. TNRCC staff informed the group that the state is working to develop a Web-based data access mechanism similar to the Texas Watch data viewer for all the data processed by the state.

A volunteer monitor commented that volunteers need to be producing information that is not only of acceptable quality, but information that answers the questions that water resource managers are trying to answer. It was agreed that appropriate, relevant indicators should be included in monitoring study design.

It was noted by City of Austin staff that opportunities to share successes in putting data to use to restore waterways need to be offered, perhaps at regional or state conferences.

After the initial discussion, session participants introduced themselves and stated their current priorities. The list of priorities included:

- to be a good monitor
- to keep citizen monitoring alive and strong in Oklahoma
- to educate communities and young people



- to produce useful data
- to manage and represent the data effectively
- to understand what volunteer monitoring programs want and need
- based on experience, to communicate successful ways to use data to advocate and implement solutions
- to collect monthly water quality data for city funding decisions
- to assemble as much high quality data at the state level as possible
- to take advantage of volunteer monitoring as a resource and research tool at the state level
- to use public outreach to inform and educate both volunteer monitors and the public at large (especially the public)
- to forge alliances, strengthen collaboration, and increase the use of volunteer monitoring data
- to expand outreach to the masses
- to expand citizen monitoring opportunities in Louisiana
- to educate, inspire, and honor environmental protection efforts by young people, and to protect areas where development threatens watersheds
- to support volunteer monitors and to manage quality assured data
- to help students visualize their watersheds and understand the connection between their local streams and conditions in the Gulf of Mexico
- to establish connections between resource providers to efficiently serve the monitors and to evolve in effective service delivery
- to respond to the growing number of participants who want to become involved, while clearly communicating about data use
- to keep volunteer monitoring in the consciousness of agencies (EPA) in funding decisions

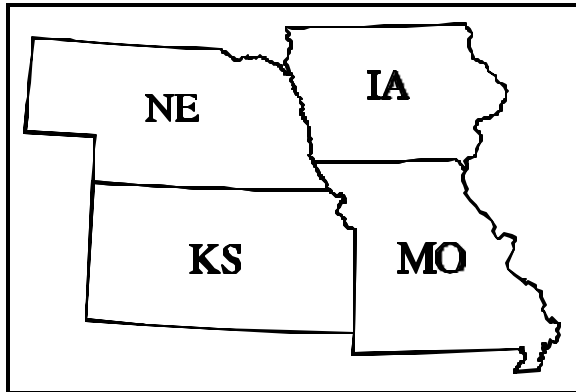
Closing remarks:

The best friend the environment has is an involved, informed public. Political decisions have severely curtailed government's ability to sustain volunteer environmental monitoring.



REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

notes from Region 7



Discussion leader:

Sharon Clifford
Missouri Dept. of Natural Resources
Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102
phone: 573/751-7298, fax: 573/526-5797
email: nrclifs@mail.dnr.state.mo.us

This breakout session included much discussion of the status of volunteer monitoring in each of the Region 7 states represented at the meeting (Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska). Participants discussed funding issues, monitoring methods and equipment, key parameters, and related topics.

Some of the key questions discussed in the breakout were:

What are the obstacles to a bigger role for volunteer

monitoring in Region 7 states?

Iowa noted that the state legislature is an obstacle to an expanded role for volunteer monitoring, and that additional staff were needed to promote the volunteer program and meet the demand for trainers etc. in the state. Nebraska cited a need for a QA/QC program and agency acceptance of volunteer data. In Missouri, some members of the agricultural community are creating barriers to the continued growth of volunteer monitoring in that state.

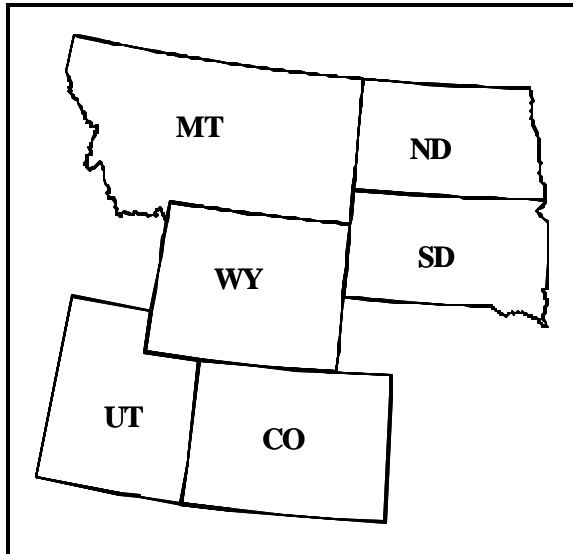
What is needed to take volunteer monitoring “into the mainstream?”

The following suggestions were offered to encourage increased acceptance of volunteer data and of volunteer programs within the Region 7 states: volunteer data should be linked to state data; the volunteer data itself should be more accessible; more support is needed from agency management/administrators; legislators need to be educated; a marketing approach is needed to help “sell” volunteer monitoring; programs could be advertised through social events; kids could help spread the word about the value of volunteer monitoring, as they are non-threatening and are very direct.



REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

notes from Region 8



Discussion leaders:

Barb Horn
Colorado Division of Wildlife
151 E 16th, Durango, CO 81301
phone: 970/382-6667, fax: 970/247-4785
email: barb.horn@state.co.us

Tina Laidlaw, Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator
USEPA Region 8
8 EPR-EP, 999 18th Street, Suite 500
Denver, CO 80202
phone: 303/312-6880, fax: 303/312-6071
email: laidlaw.tina@epa.gov

Specific issues and needs of program in Region 8 were discussed and highlighted:

- Concern that 319 monies are used to fund volunteer monitoring in some states, but not in others. In particular, because of the 20% cap for 319 that can be spent on monitoring activities, several states do not support volunteer monitoring programs. Specifically, Colorado does not support volunteer monitoring efforts with 319 monies, despite the fact that they have one of the strongest volunteer monitoring programs in the country.
- Interest was raised in support of a regional database. STORET was mentioned as one option, if EPA Regional support was provided.
- A need for Region 8, or Western, guidance documents was discussed. EPA's national documents serve as a good template, but participants of the breakout stressed the need for guidance documents specific to Western water issues.
- The group voiced the need to increase the amount of support to the Rocky Mountain Watersheds Volunteer Monitoring Network. This support could be from EPA, and the other groups interested in volunteer monitoring.